## Chapter VII

# Making Knowledge Management System an Effective Tool for Learning and Training

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## ABSTRACT

*In view of the need of using knowledge management (KM) systems for learning and training, this chapter discusses six major design factors of such KM systems based on learning literatures, namely media of representation, multiple perspectives, complexity, user control, online support and navigation aids. Their implications toward learning and training effectiveness as well as various strategies and implementation methods are investigated in four categories: content, motivation, support and accessibility. It is believed that by considering the factors involved and their potential impacts on learning in the design of KM systems, the effectiveness of using these systems for learning, training and problem solving will be significantly improved.*

# Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) is becoming one of the most significant factors in determining organizational success (Bowman, 2002), because knowledge has become the key economic resource and the dominant source of comparative advantage influencing everything from a company's strategy to its products, from its processes to the very way the firm is organized (Ruggles, 1998). In fact, KM performs a range of functions for personal growth and organizational effectiveness, namely, gathering knowledge, organizing knowledge, distributing knowledge, and converting knowledge into action. Therefore, a KM system should have the capability to support knowledge acquisition, decision making, communication, reference material searching, and human resource development such as training (Plass & Salisbury, 2002).

While most businesses appreciate the strategic value of knowledge and the need to manage their knowledge assets, many of them seem unable to derive real benefits from their efforts (Murray, 2002). Fahey and Prusak (1998) summarized 11 problem areas with KM in organizations, namely working definition of knowledge, knowledge stock instead of knowledge flow, roles of individuals, creating shared context, role of tacit knowledge, knowledge of uses, thinking and reasoning, future knowledge, experimentation, technology-human interface and measures of knowledge. In another study (Hunter et al., 2002), social and cultural issues are found to be potential inhibitors for KM practices. Furthermore, lack of senior management understanding and support can also substantially reduce the gain of KM deployment (Horwitch & Armacost, 2002). As such, measures and recommendations are suggested in various literatures to make KM more effective (e.g., Bowman, 2002; Horwitch, 2002; Hunter et al., 2002; Murray, 2002). Various architectures for KM development were also proposed (e.g., Bollouju et al., 2002; Galup et al., 2002; Nemati et al., 2002; Plass & Salisbury, 2002).

Since a KM system supposedly collects all essential organizational knowledge, it has been used as a very effective tool for human resources development, such as training of new and existing staff (Carlile, 2002). Such practices are different from traditional classroom training, since they are mainly technology-based and trainee-centered. In this regard, the design of a KM system has to take consideration of other factors besides the above-mentioned factors such as knowledge presentation, system design and online support. Particularly, from the learning point of view, a KM system has to be designed to support learners' exploration, thinking and reasoning, and problem solving. Therefore, learning

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